

WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION STRATEGIC PLAN 2009-2011

MISSION

The Washington State Transportation Commission represents the public's interest in the areas of transportation policy development, long-term planning, financing, and transportation system and service delivery.

LISTING OF STATUTORY AUTHORITY REFERENCES

There are five primary statutes pertaining to creation of the Commission and outlining its general responsibilities.

- RCW 47.01.051 creates the Commission and establishes the Commission's membership.
- RCW 47.01.061 establishes guidelines for the Commission's procedures and internal operations.
- RCW 47.01.071 & .075 outline the Commission's functions, powers and duties.
- RCW 47.56.030 establishes the Commission as the tolling authority.
- RCW 47.60.315 authorizes the Commission to set ferry fares and pricing policies.

AGENCY GOALS

1. Suggest transportation policy and provide financial recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor's Office on specific policy and funding issues, and on the development of long-term policy and finance planning.
2. Actively engage the public and stakeholders to allow for input into the development of the Commission's transportation plans, policies and financing recommendations that reflect statewide transportation needs.
3. Serve as the state's tolling authority setting highway tolls and ferry fares in a manner that considers user input and addresses system needs. Tolls will be set to meet anticipated funding obligations and, to the extent possible, to optimize system performance in accordance with the Commission's statutory mandate.
4. Provide oversight over the Department of Transportation's Innovative Partnerships Program to ensure a fully independent proposal and bid review process, as well as ensuring an informed, unbiased final selection and contract execution protocol.
5. Conduct a survey of ferry users every two years to inform levels of service, operational, pricing, planning, and investment decisions.

AGENCY OBJECTIVES

Submit final reports on work assigned to the Commission by the Legislature and Governor, including two current policy studies: 1) Ferry User Survey; 2) Long-Term Ferry Funding Study.

Submit an annual transportation report to the Legislature and the Governor's Office communicating citizen input as heard through the Commission's outreach efforts, identifying critical transportation needs throughout the state, identifying challenges facing policy makers in the coming year, and providing specific policy and funding recommendations for consideration in the upcoming legislative session.

Maximize opportunities for interaction between the Commission and the public including transportation stakeholders, state and local governments, Regional Transportation Planning Organizations, and Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

Increase communication and interaction between the Commission, the Legislature, Governor's Office, Office of Financial Management, Department of Transportation, the state's Congressional delegation, Federal officials, and local and regional government officials.

Conduct studies and investigations that will facilitate and inform policy and funding discussions. Also conduct surveys of a representative sample of ferry users to gather information on their travel behaviors and opinions.

Set tolls on authorized state highway facilities and set ferry fares as required by law.

Provide oversight of the Department of Transportation's Innovative Partnerships program.

STRATEGIES

Strategies for Implementing Goal #1 – Suggest transportation policy and provide financial recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor's Office on specific policy and funding issues, and on the development of long-term policy and finance planning.

- Submit an annual report to the Legislature, the Governor's Office and the Office of Financial Management. This report will reflect the results of the Commission's ongoing public outreach, policy studies, and investigations and will identify critical transportation needs and challenges facing policy makers in the coming year. It will also provide specific policy and funding recommendations for consideration in the upcoming legislative session.
- Provide regular communications to the Legislature, the Governor's Office and the Office of Financial Management regarding transportation issues and needs.
- Update the Washington Transportation Plan every four years to provide a basis for long-term investment and policy planning, and to support the budget process.

Strategies for Implementing Goal #2 — Actively engage the public and stakeholders to allow for input into the development of the Commission's transportation plans, policies and financing recommendations that reflect statewide transportation needs.

- In addition to meetings in Olympia, hold approximately five Commission meetings per year in cities around the state to allow for the exploration of local transportation issues.
- Hold regional transportation forums every three to five years that will bring together transportation interests from all around the state and region to discuss key transportation issues, identify opportunities and address problem areas.

- Engage local/regional leaders and officials (including Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Regional Transportation Planning Organizations, and Tribal Transportation Planning Organizations) in discussions related to the Commission's work and its impact on their city/county/region. Also engage these organizations to learn more about their transportation related work and efforts underway, as well as their overall transportation needs.
- Engage transportation officials in neighboring jurisdictions and states on transportation policy and funding issues.
- Meet with key stakeholders on a regular basis to strengthen relationships and ensure open communication on various transportation issues statewide.
- Collaborate with other state, regional and local transportation related agencies to strengthen the effectiveness of systemwide efforts aimed at improving overall connectivity.
- Actively attend and participate in professional seminars, forums, conferences, and other various city, county and regional functions and meetings in which transportation topics and issues are discussed.
- Give informative presentations on a regular basis and participate in other public outreach efforts to discuss transportation issues and solicit feedback from the public.

Strategies for Implementing Goal #3 - Serve as the state's tolling authority setting highway tolls and ferry fares in a manner that considers user input and addresses system needs. Tolls will be set to meet anticipated funding obligations, and to the extent possible, to optimize system performance in accordance with the Commission's statutory mandate.

- Set tolls and ferry fares at levels that ensure the state is able to meet its financial obligations and commitments, maximizes system performance and utilization of existing capacity, and is able to deliver on any other mandates as specified in law.
- Set ferry fares so as to be forecasted to recover that portion of planned operating expenses specified by each year's enacted transportation budget.
- Hold hearings to allow for public input into the Commission's toll and ferry fare setting process and decision-making.
- Seek advisement from citizen advisory committees as appropriate.
- Consult with the Legislature, the Governor's Office, the Office of Financial Management and the Department of Transportation to ensure the Commission's toll and ferry fare setting direction and actions are clearly understood and are responsive to each agency's needs and issues.
- Consult with the Department of Transportation to ensure any toll action taken by the Commission adequately meets the requirements of the subject facility and is in concert with other DOT programs that may be impacted by the toll setting.

Strategies For Implementing Goal #4 - Provide oversight over the Department of Transportation's Innovative Partnerships Program (TIP) to ensure a fully independent proposal and bid review process, as well as ensuring an informed, unbiased final selection and contract execution protocol.

- Periodically review the administrative rules which guide the operations and administration of the TIP program.
- Explore various types of financing approaches for transportation related projects and ensure that any new and innovative methods of financing related to administering state

highway projects is feasible, meets the requirements of RCW 47.29 et seq., and is in the public's best interest.

- Serve as the final decision maker on bid/proposal reviews and selection, and final contract execution.
- After adequate advisement from expert review panels, actively consult with the Legislature, the Governor's Office and the Office of Financial Management for purposes of deciding whether or not a proposed project agreement should be accepted, denied, or further negotiated.

Strategies For Implementing Goal #5 - Conduct a survey of ferry users every two years to inform levels of service, operational, pricing, planning, and investment decisions.

- Retain the services of a private surveying firm to assist the Commission in carrying out the survey, assuming adequate funding is provided.
- Coordinate with the Legislature, the Governor's Office, and the Department of Transportation's Ferry Division in preparing, executing, and applying survey findings of ferry users every two years.
- Ensure the survey provides statistically valid results by gathering information from a representative sample of ferry customers.
- Use the survey to gain information on user travel behaviors and attitudes to gain feedback on possible operational, pricing and other strategies under consideration.
- Consider survey findings in future fare deliberations and funding recommendations to the Legislature and Governor.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES & TARGETS

Current Commission Output Measure:

By survey, percentage of individuals satisfied with their access to and the process of Commission decision-making.

Performance Target:

75% of Commission customers are satisfied.

Actual Result:

90% of Commission customers are satisfied.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

Efforts to Close the Gap:

Based upon the results of the Commission's biennial survey, there is a positive gap in that we are exceeding our performance target, as we have done in the past.

However, the Commission continues to work towards improving its satisfaction rating and in doing so, intends on making the following adjustments:

- The Commission will increase its number of outreach events which will therefore increase the public's access to transportation decision makers and provide them with the opportunity to shape state policy and budget decisions.
- Commissioners will participate in additional transportation related public meetings throughout the state as appropriate. They will also proactively pursue public speaking

engagements to further allow for the sharing of transportation related information with the general public and stakeholders.

ASSESSMENT OF EXTERNAL CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

The critical factors for the Commissions' consideration in the implementation of its goals are as follows:

- The ever-increasing demand being placed upon the current transportation system infrastructure.
- The ongoing need for additional investments to be made in the statewide transportation system to address growing demands and deficiencies.
- The challenge presented by significant public skepticism regarding the level of government accountability and trust in how tax dollars are spent.
- The ever-growing complexity of multi-layered transportation governance at the local, regional and state levels, leading to potential overlap, conflict and competition over the same tax base and opportunities.
- Challenges and opportunities for better connectivity between all modes of transportation to maximize the use of existing infrastructure and the challenges and opportunities to use evolving technologies.

ASSESSMENT OF INTERNAL CAPACITY & FINANCIAL HEALTH

The current size of the Commission staff is not sufficient to ensure successful accomplishment of all of the goals and strategies contained herein if the Commission is to do so in an independent, self-supporting manner.